



ASLEF

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JOURNAL
SEPTEMBER 2011



More than
just a **union**

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Our future in our hands

I received a couple of proposals last month. This sounds attractive – until I tell you they were from Bob Crow and Gerry Doherty!

They are the general secretaries of the RMT and the TSSA, two unions that have decided to begin 'formal talks which could ultimately lead to a merger'. Initially they are setting up a 'federation structure'.

They decided to write to me, as ASLEF's general secretary, to tell me that 'the door will remain open for other smaller specialist unions in transport'.

Who can that mean, I wonder!

When I wrote back I began on a positive note, stressing that good communications between the rail unions is vital, especially in the current political and economic climate. I assured them that we'd be pleased to contribute to any talks about forming closer working relationships.

But I also said quite unequivocally that this is as close as we want to get. We share core values with a number of unions, but we jealously guard our right to advance the pay and conditions of train drivers – without hindrance or restriction from anyone.

We will continue to do that by remaining an independent specialist trade union. I often wonder how many other specialist groups of workers who lost their identity by being swallowed up in mega-unions wish they could turn the clock back.

These mergers always start with the specialists being offered 'autonomy' – which seems to me to be a contradiction: their autonomy – the ability to make their own decisions without outside interference – is exactly what they are required to give up! A few years later, they are swallowed whole and disappear into a well of bureaucracy, never to be seen again.

It's not going to happen to our union. By ensuring our destiny remains in our own hands, ASLEF will deliver both its obligations towards its own members and its responsibilities to others.

Keith Norman

General Secretary



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More than just a union

One man's Tolpuddle

THE weather wasn't promising as we waited for our coach outside the UNISON building at Manor House on the Sunday morning of 17 July. Among our number were Dot Gibson, national secretary the National Pensioners Convention, along with Bill Guy and George Lesley.

Other ASLEF colleagues joined us at Euston station as we started the journey to Tolpuddle. Our arrival at the Dorset village was welcomed by a change in the weather, now offering broken cloud and a refreshing breeze: the brighter weather matched our mood as we found the NPC stall. It was already being efficiently staffed by Neal Duncan-Jordan, the NPC President Frank Cooper and members of the Dorset NPC.



The remainder of the morning passed pleasantly, with the sound of eminent speakers at the rostrum wafting over the site, all sounding the clarion call for support against the atrocities being perpetrated by the Com-Dem coalition. Then, at half past two, the assembled groups from all over the country formed up to parade through Tolpuddle.

The NCP set off with the others. Bill Guy was, in his usual fashion, vocalising the challenges and urging support for pensioners, all of which was well received – especially by senior citizens who lined the route. It was a pleasant way to spend an afternoon, and as usual we were proud to be part of a demonstration of solidarity carried out in a carnival atmosphere.

Although I had gone along to volunteer my services to the NCP, I was pleased to see National Officer Simon Weller with Mick Whelan leading the ASLEF contingent with our national banner ahead of those of the Southern Region, Southampton, Weymouth, Bristol (ably assisted by Paddington member Collette Gibson and her two sons). I also chanced upon former LUL member Colin Bright, EC member Mars Colombini, Jim Peters from East Coast Kings Cross and many others whose names I did not get.



But to all of you who came along – well done! And to those of you who didn't – see you next year!

P. J. Smith, Retired Members' Section

● ASLEF had booked a stall at the rally but foul-up by the organisers meant we weren't allocated a place. National Organiser Simon Weller was not best pleased – as he had arrived at Tolpuddle with all the materials.

Thai union leaders jailed for safety protests

The Thai Labour Court last month approved the dismissal of seven leaders of the SRUT railway workers' trade union for their part in a safety-related industrial action – and imposed a fine of 15 million Thai Baht (£310,000).

The union officials were punished for their part in industrial action taken in October 2009 in the State Railways of Thailand (SRT). The action aimed to publicise the deplorable safety failings on the network – which earlier that month had led to two derailments and one accident which killed seven people and injured many others.

The union wanted to highlight facts like the driver having only one rest day the previous month, and that only 20% of Thai trains are equipped with such basic equipment as the driver's 'deadman's handle'.

David Cockroft, the general secretary of the International Transport Federation, to which ASLEF is affiliated, challenged the independence as well as the fairness of the court, adding, 'We are concerned by the judge's statement that basic safety devices found worldwide on trains are nothing more than 'supplementary devices'.

In a letter to the Thai

ambassador, Keith Norman said, 'If these dismissals and punitive action are allowed to go ahead then we believe that not only will safety standards on the SRT plummet, but that irrecoverable damage will be done to workers' rights in your country and to its image abroad.' He pointed out that the action has been taken 'in response to a potentially disastrously grave safety situation on your nation's rail network' and that it would be considered 'entirely legitimate expression under ILO conventions'. He demanded the withdrawal of 'these unjust and punitive measures'.



Proposed cuts to Transport Police raises concern at Shrewsbury branch

Union raises BTP cuts

The Shrewsbury branch recently passed a resolution expressing concern about cuts to the British Transport Police (BTP) and called on the union's executive committee (EC) to campaign to get them reversed.

The branch was 'absolutely appalled at the proposed cutbacks and job losses to the civilian and British Transport Police forces and of the subsequent enhanced threat of violence that our members will have to endure'.

As a result, the General Secretary has written to the British Transport Police Authority expressing 'concern that the force cannot deliver the same level of service in the face of a 3.3% reduction in its budget'. A response is awaited.



EU BOOST FOR MONSTER TRUCKS

The Danish Minister of Transport, Hans Christian Schmid, told the German transport magazine DVZ that his country will push the EU-wide admission of longer and heavier vehicles (LHVs) while Denmark holds the EU council presidency in the first half of 2012.

Samaritans steer driver trauma support

The working group to aid drivers following a fatality is now developing a Trauma Support Training Course and preparing a booklet on managing trauma, reports **Andy Botham**, who represents ASLEF on the National Suicide Prevention Group (NSPG).

The one-day course has predominantly been designed for union representatives and Driver Managers and will aim to equip candidates to

- Identify what trauma is
- Understand why people react differently to traumatic events
- Provide first aid in emotional support to colleagues
- Consider individual coping strategies

The course provider, Steve Tollerton, works for the Samaritans but has put it together by consulting drivers who have been involved in a rail fatality, spending time on the footplate and accompanying one driver to a coroners court.

A pilot course at Derby in June was deemed beneficial by participants, including ASLEF executive committee members Hugh Bradley, Dave Calfe and Nigel Gibson. The only surprise expressed was that nothing of this type had been done before.

The ASLEF logo is on all the course materials and the union has written a Foreword to the booklet. Accreditation through The Open College Network has also been secured.

Places on the 12 to 20-student courses will be divided between ASLEF reps and Driver Managers. The £50 charged to companies will leave a small surplus to fund later courses.

The aim is to have 75% of Company Council representatives and Driver Managers trained within the next nine months, and then to roll the course out to all ASLEF representatives within a two-year span. Hopefully the courses will attract the enthusiastic response they deserve.

As well as the training, the group has produced a booklet called 'Managing Trauma' which will be made available to all train drivers. It will contain information on the causes, signs and effects of trauma and offer practical advice on coping strategies and where to seek additional help.

I would like to place on record thanks to the Samaritans, Network Rail, East Midlands Trains and the rest of the NSPG for all the help in achieving what we have.



Tube drivers work in stately homes!

Well, not quite: but 16 of the Tube's best-known stations have been given 'listed building' status – and Simon Thurley, head of English Heritage, says they are 'as valuable to London's architectural story as many more famous buildings like the Houses of Parliament'.

They include two of the busiest stations in central London – Oxford Circus and Covent Garden as well as St John's Wood which is well known to Lord's cricket fans. The red facades of early 20th century Belsize Park and Russell Square are recognised along with the art deco style of Arnos Grove and Sudbury Town.

The stations with Grade II status are Aldwych, Belsize Park, Brent Cross, Caledonian Road, Chalk Farm, Chesham, Covent Garden, Hendon Central, Oxford Circus, Perivale, Redbridge, Russell Square, St John's Wood, West Acton, and Wood Green. Arnos Grove, Oakwood, and Sudbury Town have been upgraded to Grade II*.

STATS ON TRACKS - 2010/2011

The RSSB Annual Safety Performance Report for 2010/2011 reveals that in the period there were

- 1.4 billion passenger journeys (an 8% increase on 2009/10)
- covering 54.5 billion passenger kilometres (a 6% increase)

Other headline points include

- For the fourth year in succession there were no passenger or workforce fatalities in train accidents. There were also no fatalities to members of the public in train accidents.
- There were 18 potentially higher-risk train accidents, a significant reduction on the previous year's total of 42 (which, at the time, was the lowest number on record).
- At the end of 2010/11, the estimated level of risk from signals passed at danger (SPADs) was higher than the level at the end of 2009/10 – but 16% lower than the September 2006 baseline level,
- There were 40 accidental fatalities, 395 major injuries, 11,075 minor injuries and 1,331 cases of shock/trauma.
- There were 31 fatalities to members of the public, excluding those due to suicide or suspected suicide. Of the total, 27 were trespassers, and the remaining four were pedestrians at level crossings.

Additional reports from the Office of Rail Regulation reveal that in the same period

- 90.9% of all trains ran on time
- complaints decreased by 5.9%
- the average increase in rail fares between January 2010 and January 2011 was 6.0%.

The only notably bad news was the revelation that in the period rail moved only 18.3 billion tonne kilometres of freight, which amounts to a 4% decrease.



TRANSPORT SPENDING: NORTH SOUTH GAP GROWS

A report from the Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG) last month shows that, per head, transport spend in London is now almost three times that in the North of England and the West Midlands, where transport spending per head averages £286.



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Profit boost for sacked rail franchise

National Express, whose performance on the East Coast route was so abysmal two years ago that the government took its franchise away, is happily scooping profits from its other rail interests.

It has posted a jump in its half-year profits to £95.5 million. ASLEF called on the government to ban the company from any UK franchises in the light of its performance on the East Coast, but, in the words of the union's Keith Norman, 'it has been allowed to continue to cherry-pick where it sees profits, and discard when the going gets rough'.

This six month's £95.5 million profits have largely come from National Express' c2c commuter line between Fenchurch Street and Essex, and the East Anglia route into Liverpool Street.

Keith Norman says it is a

disgrace that a company can fail so abjectly in one franchise, but continue to cream profits off other routes it chooses. 'This is the final proof that franchising is a ludicrously inefficient system entirely biased in favour of the company at the expense of the customer and the staff,' Keith says. 'It is crazy to allow a company that has failed abjectly to basically open a new shop next door. At least they should be banned from UK rail franchises until they have repaid their debts to UK rail passengers.'

Meanwhile National Express chief executive Dean Finch says, 'We hope in time we can rehabilitate ourselves and win more rail franchises.'

'I bet he does,' says Keith. 'Everyone would like a licence to print money, assured that you can't make a loss.'

Why pay out for pension protection we don't need?



Kelvin Hopkins MP, who chairs ASLEF's Parliamentary Group, has written to Ian Duncan Smith, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, to argue that our pension fund should not be reduced by having to pay the government for pension protection we simply don't need. Train Operating

Companies have so far been obliged to pay £60m into the Pension Protection Fund - which is 5% of the total railway pension fund and equates to a cost of £200 for every member.

The Pension Protection Fund (PPF) was set up in 2005 by the Labour Government to ensure no one who had paid into a scheme for their whole working lives could end up without a pension if their employer went bankrupt. Previously workers who had paid into a fund for decades could end up losing it all because of bad decisions by management leading to their employer going under and the pension fund following suit.

The law says that all Defined Benefit (DB) schemes without a Crown Guarantee (public sector schemes where the state will always bail them out) have to pay a levy into the PPF. The amount is based on the size of the scheme and the financial strength of the employer. If the employer goes insolvent, the PPF will pay full pensions to those already retired or who retire due to ill health. Those not yet retired are guaranteed to receive 90% of the benefits they have accrued.

MONEY FOR NOTHING

This is all well and good, but ASLEF has long argued that the TOC fund should be exempt - because they will never call on this fund. Why? Because when a company pulls out of a franchise, the trains still need to run, so staff come into work the next day with their salaries and pensions paid for by the state until the franchise is re-tendered. Recent examples of this are Connex and the East Coast Mainline.

Technically TOCs have no Crown Guarantee - but in fact they have the same protection. Quite simply, our members are paying for insurance they will never need. It's like having to pay car insurance without owning a car. The trustees have made objections about this but with no success, so EC member Hugh Bradley asked for the matter to be raised with ASLEF's Parliamentary Group.

Kelvin Hopkins MP has now also written to Ian Duncan Smith to explain our objections and support the union case.

'The McNulty Report seeks value for money from our railways,' says Kelvin. 'Well here's millions being wasted every year for a start.'

● A report by LCP, a firm of business consultants who specialise in pensions, says UK employers will save £73bn as a result of some adopting the consumer prices index (CPI) rather than the retail prices index (RPI) as a tool for measuring inflation for pensions.

'This will solely benefit employers rather than their staff,' the company says.

KICKING FOR BOMBARDIER

Derby County players wore 'Save Our Rail Industry - Derby United' shirts for their first game of the football season against Birmingham City. Twenty children of Bombardier workers were special guests while the team's manager, Nigel Clough, said, 'We support the campaign to make the government think again about its decision to award the Thameslink contract to Siemens.'



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Threat to injury compensation



Victoria Phillips, head of employment rights at Thompsons Solicitors, warns that part of a Bill to be put before Parliament will threaten the right of many to progress claims for injury compensation ...

A potentially devastating attack on vulnerable people's access to justice is hidden in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill that Justice Secretary Ken Clarke put before Parliament last month.

Swingeing cuts to Legal Aid were largely hidden in the furore about his (now dropped) plans for criminals who plead guilty to have their prison sentence halved. Perhaps it was hoped that the threat to Legal Aid would go unnoticed.

Ken Clarke's plans for the 'reform' of civil litigation funding and costs in England and Wales will have a huge impact on the ability of people injured through no fault of their own to seek compensation.

Knocking 'no win no fee' is easy meat for politicians and the press. They love to refer to a 'compensation culture' - even though all government studies say we aren't in the grip of one. Love it or loathe it the system is the only way that someone injured in a workplace accident, caused by the negligence of their employer, can currently pursue justice.

DENY AND LIE LOW

The law says that the injured party has to prove who was to blame and show that their injury was down to that negligence. All the defendants - usually the employer's insurer - have to do is deny everything.

At the moment a successful claimant receives their compensation in full. That seems right. After all, they didn't want to

get hurt.

Ken Clarke wants to stop the losing party having to pay premiums for insurance taken out to cover the costs of outlays in a case, such as for medical reports.

A lawyer for injured people doesn't get paid for their time if they lose a case or if they investigate a case but then have to drop it. To recognise the risk they won't get paid, claimant lawyers get a 'success fee' from the guilty party in successful cases. All sides of litigation agreed to and fixed the success fees. Clarke says they can continue but instead of being paid by the guilty party they will come out of injured people's compensation - up to 25% of it.

This means that people who didn't want to get hurt or lose money due to an accident face losing a significant chunk of their damages. And they will be the lucky ones.

CASES WON'T RUN

A large proportion of cases that would be run today won't be run tomorrow. Injured people with anything but straightforward cases will find that lawyers won't be prepared to take on their case - because if they eventually have to turn it down or they lose, they won't get paid. Lawyers won't take on anything that looks risky if they don't have a fund from success fees that they can fall back on.

It won't matter how seriously injured they may be. Under the government's plans a person may be unable to get justice unless their case is clear cut, or they can afford to pay upfront fees.



These changes will do nothing about referral fees (a nice little scam for insurers and claims farmers) and they won't stop claims companies advertising because they will just screen all cases looking only to take on easy wins.

The plans won't save any money for the government either - indeed we will just see more

injured people reliant on the NHS and benefits when compensation for their accident would have helped pay for their care and kept them out of poverty.

Who saves money from these changes? Insurance companies. Does that mean reduced insurance premiums or just more profit for the shareholders? What do you think?

McNULTY SPENDS £218K TO CUT COSTS!

A Freedom of Information request, made to the Department of Transport by an ASLEF member, reveals that Sir Roy McNulty pocketed a total of £218,515 for his work on the 'Independent Rail Value for Money' report. 'Value for Money?' You couldn't make it up!

City on the streets as Government snubs Bombardier

THOUSANDS of demonstrators took to the streets of Derby last month protesting at the threatened loss of 1,400 jobs at the city's Bombardier plant. This follows a government decision to award 'preferred bidder' status for a £1.4 billion contract for building a fleet of passenger trains for the Thameslink rail service to a competitor, the German-based Siemens conglomerate.

The Derby works, which a century ago employed over 40,000 people, could close completely once order books are empty in 2014.

'I've never been on a demonstration like it,' said Tim Finch, ASLEF's head of Industrial Relations. 'Shoppers turned round to applaud us as we walked down the street. Usually they're chucking things!' Derby branch secretary Andy Botham pointed out

that the effects of Bombardier closing would be 'a disaster' for the city. 'The 1,400 jobs are only the start of the depression: it's estimated that another 12,000 jobs in the supply chain are dependent on work from Bombardier.'

The entire city rallied to back the event. Marchers came from family and friends of Bombardier staff – including senior management – as well as workers from related industries, like our ASLEF members. The breadth of support was illustrated by the speakers who included Bombardier's UK chairman, Colin Walton; former Labour minister and local MP Margaret Beckett; the Conservative leader of Derby City Council, Philip Hickson; the editor of the Derby Telegraph and Labour MP Chris Williamson.

Will the combination of Bombardier's workers and unions, its entire senior



The union's local branch took up the call



The rally united the town

management team, the local community and representatives of all three main political parties be enough to sway this government? Time will tell – but at least a good start was made last month in a wonderful show of unity ...

End the North/South divide

says **Annie Winters**, a train driver from Salisbury

I WAS in Derby attending the Bombardier rally in protest against the government's decision to award the Thameslink contract to Siemens of Germany. The city of Derby came to a standstill as an estimated 10,000 protesters marched from the Bass recreation ground to a rally at the Silk Mill – an apt location as it marks the scene where in 1833 workers battling for better conditions were locked out.

For me this was the culmination of three weeks hard work printing and distributing posters and leaflets to depots along my routes in the hope of raising awareness and encouraging other ASLEF members to join me in protest. I received a number of negative remarks from train crew in the mess rooms I visited, mainly along the lines of 'there's no point', and 'it won't change anything', and sadly only one SWTs driver joined me for the rally. Stand up Mick White, a Northam driver, who brought his branch banner with their blessing! Thank you Mick. Thank you Northam.

But I don't understand why train crew in the south are so lacking in drive to give active support for this issue. On one hand, many were more than happy to sign the petition – but none seemed very keen to put themselves out to attend the rally. Can it be that cocooned in our relatively secure jobs in the 'prosperous' south we have lost the desire to fight for those who face losing their jobs in allied industries further north?

Over coming months you will be made aware of how you can support the campaign, and I hope that in future we in the south will not be found wanting. Let's show that we are ASLEF, 'proud to be union', and proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with other unions in their fight to get this decision overturned and to keep the manufacture of rolling stock in the UK.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: There were ASLEF national officers and representatives of the Derby branch at the solidarity rally, and (bottom right) the author of this piece Annie Winter, made the journey to wave the flag for Bombardier. But although Northam moved to Derby for the day, Annie wants to know why there weren't more banners on the day



Did Bombardier fail by design?

asks **Karl Davis**, a Bedford-based driver working for First Capital Connect

THE Train Driver within me initially felt a touch of relief when it was announced that Bombardier hadn't been awarded the Thameslink contract, as I find the poor design of the 377 so frustrating. The political activist within me however, viewed things differently, and when the ramifications for the Derby works hit home, I felt angry towards the government for making yet more empty promises.

Obviously, the loss of the contract signals difficult times ahead for Bombardier and its workforce in Derby. Protests and parliamentary manoeuvres have commenced, while national newspapers have begun bellowing outrage at the thought of a German company being awarded the contract over a 'British' one.

But I can't help feeling that we are missing the point by directing all our venom at David Cameron. Yes, he made promises he wasn't willing to keep. But he alone does not deserve the full brunt of blame for Bombardier failing to win that contract.

FAR FROM HEAVEN IN A 377

I have spent a few years driving Bombardier's staple offering to the EMU market within the UK. The 377 is a train that epitomises the term 'unfulfilled potential'. The units acquit themselves brilliantly in terms of braking and acceleration when in AC mode, but are dogged by poor ergonomics and design and suffer from repeated operating problems and lazy indifference in terms of comparative performance when in DC mode.

Many drivers have been exposed to repetitive injuries as a result of driving the train for extended times and muscular skeletal issues from the positioning of the DOO screens and the seat design.

The Mk 5 units' specification are worse than the Mk 1's, with all the improvements made to previous sets as a result of sustained campaigning by dedicated ASLEF reps being ignored. I think this underlines not only how poor these trains are in some areas, but also,

owing to their braking and acceleration, they are vastly underperforming. They are nowhere near well enough designed to realise their full potential

TOCs IN THE DOCK

TOCs must also share the blame. Service issues could be avoided or minimised if Driver training was more in-depth, and the DfT's failure to insist on improvements to the basic design and its short sighted penny pinching haven't helped. The promise of the 377 overall is choked off because of a lack of investment.

I believe the hard truth is that Bombardier products, despite the quality of the craftsmanship at its disposal, are a step behind other players in the sector. Siemens delivered high specification rolling stock with minimal operating and maintenance issues, and were even a step ahead when it came to financing deals. Bombardier's management have been outplayed by their competitors.

The workforce have every right to feel aggrieved at Cameron turning his back on the Derby workforce - but their management also played their part.

CLOUDY OUTLOOK

On a purely commercial basis, I can see why the contract was awarded to Siemens. On a political and moral level however, the waters become much more clouded.

The DfT have admitted, for example, that they have not carried out an assessment on the potential decimating impact of this decision on employment in the East Midlands. They have ignored the inevitable exodus of train building expertise from the UK, hidden behind concocted excuses and cynically tried to blame the previous administration and the European Union for the mess.

Cameron's government made all manner of promises to the Daily Mail-reading masses about 'standing up to Europe' and 'putting British interests first' - but on his first big industrial test, Cameron has failed.

Sadly for the dedicated and skilled workers at Derby, I fear that the management of Bombardier have unlocked the backdoor for the Tories on this issue by failing to win the bid on merit, despite the Government's litany of broken promises.



GS RAISES BOMBARDIER WITH GOVERNMENT

The General Secretary wrote to Philip Hammond, the Secretary of State for Transport, to argue that 'The British-designed Bombardier train is superior to that offered by Siemens, offering lighter weight, higher reliability and lower energy consumption' and urging him to reverse his decision to award preferred bidder status to Siemens.

Keith added, 'ASLEF's view is that the 'preferred bidder' announcement will undermine the integrity of the UK rail industry and British train manufacturing with 1,400 job losses already announced by Bombardier and serious fears that the Derby factory may close altogether.'

He proposed that the minister 'conduct a completely new fast track procurement which fairly assesses the technical capability of the bidders, their record as good employers, their willingness to invest in training and other facilities in the UK, and the socio-economic impact of their proposals.'

DISASTER AHEAD – PRO



'Complacency' is the word that springs to mind whenever I think of level crossings. Each month the death toll rises. After each one there is an outcry of grief followed by ... nothing. Yet each involved a tragedy for the family of those involved and leaves our members exposed to severe trauma that in the worse cases can end a career.

Some deaths on crossings are, I accept, unavoidable. But others result from callous neglect. I put the deaths at Moreton on Lugg near Hereford last year into that category. People died because there was no interlocking in place. Below we look at the report into that incident.

We also examine what progress we are making on obstacle detectors (OD). We have argued for the past six years for existing technology to provide cameras down the track that can convey a forward picture to the driver in the cab. Finally we can report some glimmer of a hint of progress.

Keith Norman, General Secretary

MORETON ON LUGG – AN AVOIDABLE TRAGEDY

Last year mother-of-one Jane Harding, 52, from Marden died at the crossing at Moreton-on-Lugg, Herefordshire. The safety barriers had been raised as her husband drove their car over the track. The Manchester to Milford Haven train dragged it 150 yards down the line. At the time ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman described the fatality as 'completely avoidable'. An investigation by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) supports that assessment.

The RAIB concluded that the collision happened because the signaller raised the barriers in error, believing that the train had already passed over the crossing. But it also confirmed that there was no safeguard in the signalling system to prevent this from happening. To some extent it was human error, as the signaller had been distracted by a work-related phone call. But had approach locking been in place, Jane Harding would be alive today. Without approach locking, or an equivalent engineered safeguard, there was nothing to prevent the signaller raising the barriers in error.

It has now been established that there are 54 manually controlled level crossings that do not have approach locking. ASLEF believes that as a minimum crossings should be

- protected by road traffic light signals with two lifting barriers on each side of the railway.
- have an audible warning to pedestrians
- include railway signals which provide full protection to the crossing, on both railway approaches
- have signals which are interlocked with the lifting barriers so that it is not possible to clear the signals unless the road is fully closed by the barriers. Equally it should not be possible to raise the barriers unless the signals are set at danger and free of approach locking, or the train has passed the signal and traversed the crossings.

A GENERAL REVIEW – INCLUDING CAMERAS

The RAIB also set up an investigation into the more general safety issues associated with automatic open level crossings. Its conclusions include 'the development of fixed digital

cameras and their installation at selected level crossings, particularly in combination with greater penalties, would be beneficial in improving safety and should be prioritised.'

This is something the union has proposed for the past six years – but not in this form. Over the period ASLEF has regularly approached both government and the industry, calling for the use of technology to relay electronic messages warning of obstructions from track to cab.

'This is where we feel an opportunity is being lost,' says Keith Norman. 'The detectors on trial will send messages to the crossing barriers and to the signaller, but not to the driver. I believe our favoured method could – and should – have been incorporated into the trial.'

Keith wanted a formal trial similar to the system that has been running successfully for over a decade on the track between Hong Kong and its international airport. Basically it is a track-to-train surveillance system that gives the driver real-time video information about passenger safety in the station and on board the train, as well as giving advanced warning of any hazard points on the track ahead.

The new initiative does none of this. Indeed, Network Rail says, 'Train drivers will not notice any difference to other fully enclosed and signal-protected level crossings.'

THE NEW OBSTACLE DETECTORS

The good news, however, is that Network Rail (NR) is to begin using available technology. It is to fit 50 Obstacle Detectors by 2014 (which will include both the Ely-Norwich and Crewe-



A mother died because there was no interlocking in place at Moreton

Short Crossings

LUCKY ESCAPE FOR MOBILITY DRUNK

A 43-year-old man only suffered cuts and bruises when a 100 mph train going from Liverpool Street to Clacton clipped his mobility scooter at a level crossing near Colchester in Essex last month. The driver reported the incident to the control room and when police and paramedics arrived they discovered a man worse for drink lying in the road.

The crossing barrier was reportedly down, and the

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PROGRESS AT SNAIL'S PACE



LEFT: The egg-shaped radar detector container will be situated in a corner outside the public area. **MIDDLE:** With the cover removed, it is possible to see the main dish, one of the processors (left) and the heater. **RIGHT:** The complementary detector will usually be in the 'six foot' and outside the public area.

Shrewsbury signalling upgrades) and a further 300 between 2014 – 2019. It may not be what the union is seeking, but it at least shows some inclination to use available technology to save lives.

NR has finally concluded that obstacle detection is the only viable solution to avoid collisions on full-barrier crossings. In essence, what it will do is use an obstacle detector to support and back up a signaller to determine whether a crossing is clear.

Two detectors work in tandem. The primary detector (radar radio detection) scans the area

above 50cm (20 inches) and the complementary detector (light detection) scans below that. Between them, they detect anything more than 15 cm (6 inches) above the ground. The radar has two separate processors which must both confirm 'clear' on three successive sweeps before the 'crossing clear' release is given.

Network Rail says the equipment has been used extensively on level crossings on European railways with hundreds of equipment years of totally safe operation. It also stresses that the radar 'self tests' before every operation which involves it checking its position against pre-

programmed information to prove that it is still in the correct place. It is also, NR says, resistant to direct vandalism including graffiti. If it was completely dislodged, it would fail its start-up test.

The light-detector LIDAR equipment scans closer to the ground and closer to the barriers which means it should be able to detect anyone who falls inside the barriers. It uses invisible light (lasers) which cannot be interfered with by vandals.

NR also stresses that the radar system operates with 10% of a mobile phone's power and the LIDAR equipment is around the same as a supermarket scanner – so it is not a health risk.

If an obstacle is detected on the crossing, the detectors will automatically

- Prevent the crossing from being declared 'clear'.
- Prevent the interlocking from clearing protecting signals
- For up to ten seconds after the entry barriers have lowered, hold the exit barriers up to allow a trapped vehicle/person to leave the crossing while the entry barriers stay closed. The exit barriers will be lowered as soon as the crossing is clear.
- For a further 30 seconds (if not previously cleared) lower the exit barriers again and continue scanning.
- On completion and if still unable to confirm 'crossing clear', the exit barriers will be raised and an alarm will be sent to the signaller who will treat the crossing as a failure until examined and (if necessary) rectified.

gs ...

ance service said his
e with his life was 'amazing'.

CE VAN WATCH WITH CAMERAS

ice van fitted with nine
as is being used to monitor
y at level crossings in the
f England. The purpose-
vehicle has been introduced
etwork Rail and the British
port Police.

will monitor drivers using
ings in Essex, Suffolk,
olk, and parts of

Cambridgeshire and
Hertfordshire.

Number plate recognition
technology will be used to
identify motorists using the
crossings dangerously or
illegally.

Network Rail says that where it
piloted the use of the van in parts
of the Eastern region it resulted
in 'a dramatic drop in incidents of
misuse when the camera van is
on location'.

REVISED GUIDANCE FROM THE ORR

The Office of Rail Regulation
published its revised guidance on
level crossings last month. Called

'Level Crossings: A guide for
managers, designers and
operators' is can be downloaded
from the regulator's website at
[http://www.rail-](http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1567)

[reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1567](http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1567)
It updates the guidance issues
in 1996 to reflect recent
developments in good practice,
technology and industry
standards and takes account of
changes in the law and more
recent recommendations from
the Rail Accident and
Investigation Branch.

It also incorporates the
previously separate guidance on
the level crossing order making
process which is managed by

ORR.

The union was consulted on
the draft last year and made a
number of comments.

MELBOURNE BID TO END LEVEL CROSSINGS IN 20 YEARS

Business groups in Melbourne,
Australia, say congestion at level
crossings 'costs money' and they
are putting forward plans to get
rid of the city's 172 crossings
within 20 years. In exchange they
want commercial rights to the
sites. The plan is likely to be
opposed by anti-development
groups.

I love Lucy: the version from the valleys

When delegates to ASLEF's 2010 annual conference (AAD) in Swansea heard the story of local driver Andy Wiemers, they, as many other ASLEF members over the previous year had done, reached into their pockets. This is the story that touched them, with an update on the challenges that Andy and his partner Nicola have borne with patience, fortitude and quiet dignity...



Driver Andy Wiemers at Swansea station. 'You can cope with anything after an experience like this.'

T HERE are eight of us in our family,' Andy Wiemers tells me. 'I've two step daughters, two girls and two boys and their ages range from five to 12 - which probably accounts for the bags under my eyes! Nicola and I try to treat everyone the same and not to spoil Lucy. But of course we do.'

Lucy, the fourth in the family, was just six when she was diagnosed as having Juvenile Myelomonocytic Leukemia (JMML). At the same time the doctors found Systemic Mastocytosis, which is apparently rare in anyone less than 60. It is a combination that no one had ever treated.

'The consultants and doctors weighed up their options and opinions, deciding which should be treated first, and which may have caused which: and meanwhile Lucy got worse.'

She had been ill for a year, picking up colds and having sore throats and rashes and seemed to be constantly on anti-biotics. 'We were in and out of Singleton and Morrison hospitals non-stop. And they found nothing. It was a worrying time.'

'Then in November she was referred to Cardiff for a biopsy to check Lucy's liver.'

Everything moved very quickly from then. It was terrible not knowing what the matter was - but almost as bad to find out.'

A consultant, Dr Conner, queried some of the liver slides and wanted a bone marrow biopsy. The following day he told her parents that Lucy had a strain of leukaemia

HECTIC IS A WAY OF LIFE

Was it a comfort to have Lucy's five siblings at that time?

'Yes and no. After the inevitable first reaction of tears, Nicola and I had to think what to say to the other children. Saying nothing was never an option. You can't have secrets like that: it leads to all kinds of suspicions and wrong conclusions. So we told them Lucy is poorly and she will have to spend

time in hospital where they will give her medicine that will make her better.'

'That's what we still, despite everything, want and hope will happen. You can't tell a six year old her sister is going to die.'

Besides, all the family routines were turned upside down. While Lucy was in hospital one or other of her parents were with her, leaving the other to care of the other five. Andy and Nicola led a roller-coaster of a life throughout 2010. 'Uncertainty, raised and dashed hopes all take a toll. And we had each of those - in spades.'

After six months of chemotherapy Lucy had a bone marrow biopsy - called a 'blast count' - that looks for failed cells. 'We were told nothing could be done. An operation was out of the question. They gave our daughter a year to live.'

Yet in that time of sadness and worry, Andy says 'it was wonderful to find so many hands reaching out to help, even when there was nothing that could be done.'

KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

Andy says the 'railway family' were 'right behind me from top to bottom from day one.'

The Swansea Staff Social Fund made money available so Lucy could go to places she'd always wanted to - like Disneyland in Paris - and for 'expenses that we didn't even want to think about'. Happily that still hasn't been spent. 'I hope we never need to use it.'

Lucy wanted to see America as well, but no insurance company was going to take the risk of covering her.

'Work colleagues, the union and management were all there for us. First Great Western allowed me time off and put me on light duties to help me deal with this crisis. I've only recently got back onto the footplate. I'm going over my route learning again. In the end, you have to cope.'

And it wasn't just railway people. His family

organised fun runs and socials at the rugby club, and strangers contacted them through a Facebook page Nicola set up. Local DJs and musicians got in touch and asked if they could help. 'It was deeply moving,' Andy says. 'I didn't know how to react. At first I felt like a beggar, and embarrassed by it all. But then I thought how wonderful of people to do these things for my daughter.'

OPTIONS ENDING

Then last year everything turned around. The doctors said Lucy was looking 'too well'. Tests showed a real improvement in the blast count - and the family were promised a transplant that could change Lucy's life. The turmoil began again, as Andy and Nicola dared to be optimistic for the first time in years.

That was last August. Five weeks afterwards all those dreams were shattered. Lucy had undergone the operation, but her little body had rejected the transplant.

'We were back to square one. Except now there was no functioning bone marrow whatsoever. The energy drained out of us. The rug was well and truly pulled away. That's where we are now, really. Nowhere.'

'The option of a transplant has gone. The chemotherapy is too toxic and having rejected one transplant, it could happen again. So we're now at the stage of 'palliative care', which is essentially about preventing suffering.'

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN or journal@aslef.org.uk

Lucy goes to school a couple of times a week but Andy knows she will gradually become resistant to the tablets she takes.

'We don't know how long we have with her. We keep hoping there will be new developments. That's all we can do. If there was an operation and it meant getting a new mortgage or selling what we have, we'd do it. But there is nothing.'

So while nothing is happening with Lucy, Andy felt it was best for everyone that he got back to driving. 'It makes it more normal for everyone.'

FOLLOWED FATHER TO EWS

Andy began on the railways in 1997 as a shunter at Margam when he was 20, and qualified as a driver the week after his 21st birthday.

'I worked for the council before that – and I was getting nowhere fast. On paper I was a trainee civil engineer, but my real job title should have been 'gofer'! I was sent to college part-time, but then I came back to make the tea! So I applied to EWS.

'My father was a driver in Margam until a couple of years ago and I have an uncle who worked on the railway working with computers, doing pay-roll stuff.'

COPING WITH IT ALL

Andy says that sometimes it is a surprise to him that he and Nicola have been able to cope with Lucy's illness. 'You see things like this on the telly and you think 'Poor sod' and move on to something else.'

He shakes his head. 'I don't want to get into a religious debate, but if there is a Man Upstairs, he's certainly got a strange sense of humour.'

'But in the end you have to cope. To carry on. To make life normal, like taking the kids to see the Ospreys rugby team. It's not always easy, but the positive thing about this experience is seeing the number of people – even ones you don't know – who emerge to offer sympathy and help.

'I'd like to thank them all.'



FTW invited Lucy to take a cab ride with her dad



Lucy today: still bright, still beautiful



Lucy was a mascot for the Swans last year: and as the motto says, she's second to none



Some of the women in this picture of the extended family had just completed a sponsored head shave for Latch (www.latchwales.org), the charity that supports Lucy and the other Oncology patients in the Children's Hospital for Wales. They raised over £4,000. Andy's mother is next to him, and one along is his father, an ex-Margam driver.



Little Lucy before her illness was diagnosed



Lucy's first day back at school after months of treatment

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The September 1911 ASLEF Locomotive Journal included a report on the first national rail strike, and in a contrast with today, thanked Labour for its backing..!

THE FIRST RAILWAY STRIKE

'Railwaymen are not used to striking, neither does the general public expect then to strike; in fact they are looked upon as public property to be used only in the public service – and as such they have been used. It is true there have, in times past, been

one or two strikes on individual companies, but never have we before had a national strike which affected all companies.

'There is always a cause before an effect, and on this occasion there can be no doubt there was a cause, for there were already thousands of railwaymen on

strike before the trade unions called a general strike. The reason that 52,000 men struck regardless of their organizations and the advice given by their Executive officers, can only be that the treatment which the men were receiving could no longer be endured, and if further proof was needed the very fact that the majority of the railway servants spend their lifetime in the service provided the proof. Nay, it even goes further: it proves that the

men generally cannot be such bad servants or they would not be allowed to remain in the service for such a great number of years.'

SPLENDID ASSISTANCE

In this dispute we have to thank the Labour Party, especially Messrs Ramsay Macdonald, A Henderson and G.H. Roberts for the splendid assistance rendered both in Parliament and during the negotiations which have been proceeding.

○ Extracts selected and edited by Dave Bennett

MICHAEL JOSEPH WALKER – A FRIEND

IT IS with deep sadness that I have to report the death of Mick Walker at the age of 85. Although Mick had been retired for 20 years, he kept in touch with both serving and other retired members at the various south eastern re-unions.

Along with retired driver Derek Fendick, I visited Mick in Trinity hospice a week before he died. He never bemoaned his lot, but only asked how we were.

There was a large turnout for the funeral and the wake at Mick's local in Brixton.

Our thoughts are with his widow Anne, daughters Helen and Sarah and their families, and also to the family of Joanne, Mick and Anne's daughter who sadly died some years ago.

I would just like to say that Mick (known as 'Joe' to his family and to the regulars at the Canterbury Arms) was the nicest person I have ever met.

May he rest in peace.

Jeff Veale, retired member, Battersea

NORMAN STEWARD – MBE FOR UNION WORK

NORMAN STEWARD who died recently at the age of 87 was a stalwart of ASLEF. A member of the old March branch, Norman was a local representative who then became the Chairman of the Eastern Region Sectional Council 'B', where I had the privilege to work with him for a number of years.

Never one to suffer fools gladly, particularly in his representation of footplate staff, he had the ability to leave those who never quite got

the message with his words of wisdom ringing in their ears. At the same time his thoughtful guidance and experience helped many of our members during his long years of service to ASLEF, which brought him the respect that he thoroughly deserved. In January 1986 Norman was awarded an MBE for his services to the Trade Union movement.

Our condolences go to Chris, Helen and granddaughters Sophie and Kat.

Tony West, National Secretary, Retired Members Section

ARTHUR MORRIS - A VERY POPULAR MAN

MEMBERS of the Gateshead and Newcastle Branch were very shocked at the sudden death of retired driver Arthur Morris at the age of 67. Their sense of loss was evident when St Cuthbert's church in Blaydon was packed to the rafters for his funeral on Tuesday 9 August.

The mourners who made up the congregation were from many different parts of Arthur's life, which he always lived to the full. They included his old railway mates who had started with him 50 years ago at Blaydon Shed in the last days of steam. Other friends had travelled from different parts of Scotland in a reflection of his final days on the footplate when he drove from Newcastle to Inverness and Aberdeen for East Coast Railways. From the other end of the line, messages of condolence also came from London Kings Cross. As a special mark of respect, rarely seen on the railway today, Northern Trains issued special 'stop orders' for additional trains to call at Blaydon Station so that staff

could attend the funeral.

Arthur was an accomplished accordionist, and every Christmas he went around the senior citizen's homes in the Blaydon and Whickham area of Gateshead to play a selection of carols for them. He used to keep his elderly neighbours supplied with fresh vegetables from his allotment, and he also tended their gardens in one of his many acts of kindness.

Arthur also liked a pint, which is why about ten years ago we sort-of adopted the former pit village of Wylam as our second home, regularly drinking in the local pubs. Wylam, which is ten miles west of Newcastle along the Tyne valley, could not have been a more appropriate place for railwaymen to congregate, being the birthplace of George Stephenson; the father of railways.

Arthur was a mate of mine for nearly 33 years and, together with all the staff at Newcastle Central Station, I will miss his wit and humour, and above all his company.

God Bless Mate.

John M Scott, Former Chairman, Gateshead & Newcastle Branch

KEN SETFORD

IT IS with deep regret that I have to inform you of the death of Ken Setford who died on 30 May aged 82.

A service was held on 10 June at Thanet Crematorium in Margate which was very well attended. Ken was known as the 'Gnome Man' because he made them for the workforce. They found homes throughout the Southern Region.

Ken was in the RAF Police in Germany where he met his wife Eve. They had been married for 63 years and had four children. We offer our condolences to Eve and all the family.
Ken Heydon, Battersea branch

JIMMY BALLENTINE – A NEWTON HEATH MAN

WITH sadness I report the death at the age of 87 of Jimmy Ballentine, a Newton Heath man born and bred and a TOP man in all respects. Starting at the loco in March 1941 he finally retired at Manchester Victoria when he was 65. Like many of his time, he was a man with strong views – and no problem expressing them.

He loved nothing better than a game of cards but he could effortlessly swap his crib board in the tap room for a key board in the lounge, as he was an accomplished pianist. Happily he enjoyed good health in his retirement which enabled him to nurse his wife who was not so fortunate. Illness came quickly to Jimmy and took him from his family.

Jimmy was not a man to forget.

S. Black, Retired Member, Newton Heath

EX-BR CHIEF MARSH DIES

RICHARD MARSH, who was the transport minister in Harold Wilson's 1964 – 70 Labour government and later a Chair of British Rail, died last month aged 83. Very much in the right-wing of the Labour camp, when he was Transport minister he resisted compulsory seat belts, gave the go-ahead to two motorways and in 1969 took the Queen on the first Victoria Line train, her first visit to the tube since her childhood.

Edward Heath gave him the BR job and a year after his 1971 appointment came his first industrial dispute. He prioritised High Speed Trains and launched 'parkway' stations on the edges of cities before eventually handing over to Peter Parker. Marsh later succeeded Lord Goodman at the Newspaper Publishers' Association.



Former transport minister, Richard Marsh

ANDY VINER – 47 YEARS OF CONVICTION AND HONESTY

ANDY VINER, who was tragically killed in a car crash on 18 June aged just 47, started work on the railway when he was 17. Within weeks he had not only joined ASLEF - he'd been out on strike supporting the union! Andy's great passions in life were his family, socialism and trade unionism.

He joined ASLEF as a 'second man' at Kings Cross. He quickly became a member of the branch committee, building solidarity throughout the many disputes of the time and taking part in the flexible rostering strike of 1982. He joined the Labour Party Young Socialists and became a supporter of Militant, eventually leaving the industry to work as an industrial organiser for them. He was heavily involved in setting up the Broad Left Organising Committee that worked to resist Thatcher's onslaught against the union movement.

In 1990 he started on LUL and quickly became active in the East Finchley branch. He was elected to the Trains Functional Council but the death of his partner left him with sole responsibility for the care of his two daughters forcing him to take a career break in 1999. Characteristically he ensured that he negotiated an agreement for returning to his home depot that would benefit any other driver taking a career break in the future.

Andy returned to LUL in 2004 and, despite his wish for a 'quiet life', he soon found himself pushed back into the role of local rep at Golders Green. By 2008 he had rejoined the Trains Functional. He was re-elected unopposed to this body earlier this year. He also represented ASLEF on the Labour Representation Committee (LRC).

Andy never cared about titles or status. If he saw a job that needed doing, he set out to make sure it was done. He got to the heart of any issue that was discussed and was happy to deal with the detailed research needed to back up his arguments. He turned up for Staff Side meetings every Monday morning armed with a copy of the Morning Star and the Financial Times (and a wry comment on Arsenal's weekend performance).

His detailed work on establishment numbers meant that management were forced to concede that Andy's figures on driver numbers and depot requirements were a lot more accurate than their own. He easily and cheerfully won his bet with his colleagues on Trains Council that the company would be forced to recruit new drivers more than six months before they had planned to.

His focus was always on involving others in the union, and he acted as mentor to many of us now active in ASLEF.

He identified pensions as a key area where we needed to educate our members so that we are prepared for the battles to come. He became the Trains Council expert, organising



Andy Viner: a man of great principle, intelligence and understanding

training courses and seminars for members.

The day before his funeral, which was attended by hundreds of colleagues and friends - many of whom he had helped and advised - 850,000 workers were on strike to defend their pensions. Andy would have been cheering them on in their fight for justice.

Finn Brennan, Trains Functional Council

Bob Pickup, a driver at Andy's Golders Green depot, wrote a poem about Andy which was read out at his funeral. This is what it said ...

*When a man was running from his boss,
With a cause that seemed all but lost,
You were there.
All those times when the chips were down,
And darkness cloaked us like a gown,
You were there.
When storm crows gathered to take their
first bite
And nothing was left with which to fight
You were there.
Your vastness of knowledge you would
gladly share,
ASLEF, RMT or TSSA, you didn't care,*

*Always on hand to help people out,
Waving your phone saying 'Give me a shout'.*

But the angels were jealous of a man with your skill,

So they took you, for their rep was over the hill.

They wanted you there between themselves and God

*To mediate terms with that crafty old sod.
With the earthly fight over, the heavenly*

*one begins,
And now instead of CDI's, you'll deal with man's sins.*

And when Judgement Day comes, and God makes his demands,

Of overtime and rest day working from his celestial bands,

You'll be there with St Peter, of that there's no doubt,

On the line, at the gate, chanting 'Out Brothers Out'.

Now rest well Brother, no more burdens to bear,

And fear not the dark, for one day, and for you,

We'll be there.

TED PARRISH – A GENTLEMAN

IT IS with great sadness that I have to report on behalf of Salisbury Branch the sudden passing of Brother Ted Parrish. An avid Pompey supporter, Ted served an enjoyable 20 years on the railway at Salisbury that provided him with many fond memories from which he drew strength as he fought the onset of motor neurone disease. A quiet gentleman, even at his weakest Ted remained strong. His sense of humour and pride never failed him.

At the young age of just 55 Ted leaves behind his wife Claire, son Steven and stepdaughters Kim and Laura. Our thoughts are with them.

Tom Corbin, Secretary - Salisbury Branch



Bob with local Reps Dave Shannon (left), John Swain (far right) and EC Member Terry Wilkinson (second from right)

Edgware say farewell to Bob Harris

On 8 July a presentation/leaving reception took place for former ASLEF Health and Safety rep Bob Harris, who after more than 32 years' service, left the industry due to medical problems. Bob will be missed at Edgware Road (and by his former colleagues at Baker Street) by all who knew him.

A wonderful night of eating and drinking took place in Bob's

local (the Ship Inn) and was well supported by Bob's former colleagues.

Bob was well respected by all who had the privilege to meet him, and we all wish him the best for the future.

You won't find anybody who has a bad word to say about Bob.

Lee Darnton, Secretary, Hammersmith and City Line branch



Simon bids farewell to Peter on behalf of the branch and the union

PETER ROWLAND LEAVES ASHFORD

Above is a photo of a presentation that I made to Peter Rowland who recently retired as a driver at Ashford depot. Peter was also a member of our DCC until recently.

I presented the plaque on behalf of Grove Park branch on 5 June to Peter in recognition for his loyal work on DCC for many years.

Simon Hill, Driver, Grove Park

Upcoming events

● GLOUCESTER, WILTSHIRE AND SOMERSET

This reunion will take place on Tuesday 18 October and will celebrate the return to service of 'Derby Four' No 43924 after a 24-year overhaul. Barnwood, Barrow Road and Green Park footplate crews are invited to a day out on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, former Midland Metals. If numbers permit, 3924 will be piloted by Bath's Baby Ivatt 41241. The 06-09 Bath-Glasgow will allow over six hours on the railway with our own train. Details from Mel Thorley, 17 Buttercup Drive, Stockport, SK3 8QF or by phone on 07778 556 760 or 07764 168 570.

● HITHER GREEN REUNION

HITHER GREEN is holding its 2011 annual reunion on Friday 4 November commencing at 18:00 in the Hither Green Railway and Social club, Beacon Road, SE13. Everyone connected with the depot past and present is welcome to the event, which is jointly organised by the Welfare and Social club and the ASLEF branch.

● CRICKLEWOOD REUNION

The next reunion will be at the RAFA Club, Ashburnham Rd, Bedford on Friday 7 October from 11:30. For more details contact Grahame Nash (Bristol) or Bob Hodson (Wolverhampton).

● MARYLEBONE REUNION

Marylebone branch is holding a reunion and social on the evening Friday 14 October in the Wood pub in Dorset Square (just round the corner from Marylebone Station) from 17:00 onwards. All ex-Chiltern or ex-Marylebone colleagues welcome. For details contact Neil_adams35@hotmail.com or phone him on 07879 241 245

Come and check your fringe!

ALL members are invited to fringe meetings the union has arranged at this year's TUC (London) and Labour Party (Liverpool) Conferences.

The TUC meeting at 18:00 on Tuesday 13 September invites you to 'Rail Against the Cuts'. It will be held in the Upper Vestry Room of St George's Church, 6-7 Little Russell Street in Bloomsbury, London WC1A 2HR. Speakers will include John Cryer MP, Keith Norman, Ian Lavery MP, Stephen Joseph (Campaign for Better Transport) and Diana Holland, the Assistant General Secretary of Unite.

The Labour Party fringe meeting 'McNulty: Right Diagnosis, Wrong Prescription' will take place on Sunday 25 September from 18:00 until 19:30 in the Dragon Room of the Contemporary Urban Centre, 41-51 Greenland Street, Liverpool L1 0BS. Speakers will include Maria Eagle MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Transport), Cllr Mark Dowd OBE (Chair, Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority), Gerry Doherty (TSSA general secretary) and Tosh McDonald (ASLEF vice-President).

Refreshments will be provided at both events.

GENERAL SECRETARY ELECTION – TIMETABLE

Nominations have now closed for the position of General Secretary following the decision of Keith Norman to retire. There are three candidates – Nick Whitehead, district 3 organiser, Simon Weller, the union's National Organiser, and Mick Whelan, district 6 organiser. The Executive met last month and determined that the closing date for the return of ballot papers is to be midday Monday 19 September. All working members should have a ballot form by now. If you do not, please call head office on 020 7324 2400.

Staying on – a personal decision

I'VE read letters in recent Journals about drivers wishing to stay on after 65. None so far have mentioned that there is a pension crisis in the country as a whole. Perhaps they haven't heard? Along with most other pension schemes, the railway scheme has been in deficit for some years.

The government is increasing the retirement age for everyone soon. My 25 year old civil servant daughter can't expect to draw her pension until she is aged 68.

Since the age for applying for a driving job has increased to 58, there will be less people in the railway scheme for the full term. The medical has proved over the years to be adequate for the industry standard. Some people would not pass it at 23 whilst others would at 68.

What sort of argument is it to say that you are depriving other people of having your job just by staying on?

Earlier this year my company, South West Trains, refused point blank to let drivers carry on after 65, every though some would have liked to. They have reversed that policy recently, presumably recognising the inevitable. Individuals should be able to make their own choices as to whether or not to carry on.

Barry Kocan, Farnham Depot

Thanks from Bletchley

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big 'thank you' to all the reps at Bletchley for their help and support which has enabled me to continue working for the company. Very special thanks are due to district organiser Mick Whelan for his tireless efforts.

Duncan Haslam, driver, Bletchley Depot

Staff travel stagnant

The issue of staff travel and its price will not go away. How can Europeans get better travel facilities than us in England? They travel in Europe and the UK for free. We non-safeguarded staff can travel for free in Europe but, unlike the rest of Europe, we can't travel in our own country for free. Isn't it time we were brought into line with them?

Even the long distance Priv tickets are a waste of time. I recently wanted to take a few trips. Then I found that a Priv from London to Cardiff was £49.25 and to Scotland was £65. Redhill to Wigan cost £68. I thought, 'There's no way I'm going to pay those prices. I'll add to the ozone layer and use my car or go by coach.' It was cheaper to fly to Scotland – and took five hours less. Yes, I suppose I could have tried to buy one of the cheaper on-line tickets that everyone wants (but they are so severely limited there's no chance of getting one).

In the end I paid Megabus £11.25 to take

me from Victoria to Cardiff. Do the maths. £49.25 by train or £11.25 for a coach journey that only took 45 minutes longer.

Long distance Priv tickets are a waste of time. No wonder no staff travel by train. We want free travel boxes that we can keep into retirement because people go for the cheaper option. So much for the 'green' policies of getting people out of cars and coaches and onto trains.

It's cheaper by anything apart from rail.

Dean Anderson, Caterham

Your drivers ring my bell!

I am a father with a delightful four-year-old daughter. At the weekend we often go for a walk in Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh.

I don't know if you know the bridge over the railway line in Princes Street Gardens, but many children run up to the middle of the bridge to watch the trains go underneath.

And here is the reason for my letter. I would like to pass on my sincerest thanks to all the drivers who toot their horns and wave at the children as they go by. The children love it and as a parent I can only express my pleasure at seeing my daughter being so pleased by the simple gesture.

Your members don't have to do it, but it is really appreciated and it is talked about all the way home.

I felt I had to write to say 'thank you'.
**Lloyd Langley (and Lilly),
Edinburgh**

Not speaking for branch

We would like to put the record straight regarding the letter published in the August edition of The ASLEF Journal from R W McMillan - Wolverhampton Branch.

The views expressed in no way reflect the majority of members within this branch. We feel it is remiss of Brother McMillan to offer comments on the aspirations of our fellow colleagues whose representatives are

GET VIRGIN RECORD STRAIGHT

Last month's Journal carried a story about Virgin Train's profits which gave a misleading impression. A similar distorted story appeared in the Sunday Times and Richard Branson wrote to them to point out that:

○ In 2010-11, Virgin Rail contributed a net payment to the Department of Transport of £110m.

○ In the current year he expects this to rise to £150m reflecting its strong performance as the fastest growing train company.

○ While the headline dividend figure of £17.8 million is correct, the payment is not made to Richard Branson personally, but to the Virgin Group where it is invested in new businesses.

I expect my union Journal to report the facts, without distortion. It's entirely reasonable to question private ownership in the rail industry but it shouldn't be done by misleading the Journal's readers.

Kevin Graham, Driver, Virgin Trains

democratically elected to negotiate on behalf of their members and only seek to better existing terms and conditions.

As we are a joint branch and having witnessed, through branch meetings and officers reports, the recent struggles that our colleagues at London Midland have had to endure to secure an improvement in their terms and conditions, using the word 'avaricious' appears ill-considered, as Brother McMillan has enjoyed excellent pay, terms and conditions negotiated by the Virgin Trains Company Council representatives and the recently retired chairman.

Cheers Bob.

R. Earlam (Chairman) and S. Goode (Vice Chairman), Wolverhampton branch

School visits

I read your recent article about driver David Newell with interest. It is nice to know there is still a rail company such as Chiltern Railway that sees the importance of school visits on rail safety.

I have been visiting schools for the last 26 years for BR, Railfreight and EWS. When I retired I was asked to carry on with the visits.

In 2006 however, EWS pulled out saying they no longer required my services as School Liaison Officer as schools could access the website covering rail safety supplied by Network Rail. After six months various head-teachers got in touch to ask me why I had ceased my visits. I explained about the website but was told schools preferred a train driver to speak directly to their pupils.

This summer I have visited 15 schools with a mismatch of old equipment. I asked EWS and Network Rail if they could help with either more up-to-date equipment or hand-outs but they were unable to do so.

I would be interested, therefore, to know if the union can help in any way.

P. A. Mee, Retired Driver, ex-Toton



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 75-77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER** feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

UNION OPINION DIVIDED ON HIGH SPEED

Last month saw the end of the 'public consultation' on High Speed Rail – HS2. It was one of the biggest consultation exercises ever undertaken in the UK.

But its significance was rather undermined when it became evident that the government wasn't going to take any notice of it. Transport Secretary Philip Hammond said **before the consultation had ended** that while it would be 'improper' to pre-empt any decision, he had already asked HS2 Ltd to begin the procurement process for the design and construction of the high-speed rail infrastructure!

However, one thing that did become evident last month was that not all ASLEF members have been convinced by our arguments for High Speed. In the interests of openness and debate, here are some of the concerns put forward by those with reservations about the project ...

Bottle that High Speed!

I am not normally one for speaking out, but at the age of 62 I find myself bursting from 'bottling it all up' after all these years.

I was appalled when I opened the envelope to find you wanted me to sign a petition in favour of HS2. This makes you no better than the rest of the others in the 'South of Watford Gap' brigade, only thinking of London, and yes, OK, England's second largest city.

How can you expect me, a Driver working out of Nottingham on the 'local services', to want something like the HS2 project? For a start, what would do for my colleagues on the Midland Mainline?

I've asked myself and my colleagues for a long time now, what century are we taking routes like the one to Skegness (and I'm sure countless other routes throughout the country) into?

I'm with the ones who say the billions would be best spent on the existing system – which, let's face it, is falling to pieces around us.

Lines should be reinstated. Let me give you an example. I was on Norwich Station the other day and a guy came up to me who had travelled from Cromer (Norfolk) and he wanted

SLEEP APNOEA IS NOT SICK

In November 2010 I was diagnosed with having mild sleep apnoea. I was sent for a medical and was restricted from driving duties until I had treatment to ease it to a level where it was safe to drive trains.

When I told my manager I was restricted, I was informed that a senior manager had said I was to be placed as 'sick' instead.

Imagine how I felt when I opened my payslip on New Year's Eve and discovered I had been given half pay

that month.

With the help of my DFC rep Dave Dhaliwal, I was able to undertake light duties and resumed full pay in January. I have now returned to work after having a special mouth guard made and a new sleep study.

I would like to thank LLC reps Ian Jones and Kevin Doherty for their support and to Dave for successfully concluding my claim for the lost pay.
Andrew Dix, Driver, London Overground

to know if my train was the right one for the continuation of his journey to Gainsborough in Lincolnshire). By road it is 122 miles which according to Google Maps takes 3hrs 10mins. By train, with changes, it takes 4hrs 45 - 5hrs. If the government really wants to get people out of their cars, lines must be reinstated and a 24/7 timetable introduced.

I don't need to tell you – but I will – that line speeds need increasing. Indeed faster branch line to feed the three existing Mainlines would benefit more of the country. More signalling sections are required to run more trains. The whole country wants electrifying. More stations are needed. More stock is required (although there is plenty laying idle in sidings). Structures need to be built (under or over) to eliminate level and foot crossings ...

You're OK though. I'm a pessimist – so anything I want, the opposite happens!
Mal Spencer, Driver, Nottingham

High Speed – what sort of solution?

You probably won't want to publish these thoughts, but I am concerned about the supportive response cards for the HS2 proposals because both sides of the debate are not being evaluated.

There is no greater backer of our industry than me: but I have formally opposed the proposals through the correct document; many colleagues are doing the same.

I believe in a high speed railway network for

Great Britain (by definition faster than 125 mph) but the government proposals are not the solution: development of our existing system is.

It is difficult for me to countenance a freepost 'petition' card against the long and detailed response required to the substantial consultation books. I question whether our members will realise what they are signing up to.

I estimate a cost of around £47 billion for the **initial** stage. The quoted journeys have little in common with passenger requirements. Proposals for connections at Birmingham Airport are laughable. Far better options exist at Euston without demolishing a swathe of buildings. Compensation proposals are a buy off.

Of particular concern to ASLEF should be the proposals to reduce existing services. After the initial building there will be net reductions in jobs including train drivers. Government will make serious attempts to employ non union labour. Rolling stock will be sourced overseas.

An astonishing belief held in some quarters is that government will require tilting systems to be switched off; this holds water when it becomes clear that the only way the proposed timings and integration can be countenanced is by slowing down the existing network. There is even a line of thought that the HS2 scheme is the government's final solution to destroying our existing rail network. It does nothing to allow the thousands of people who are crying out to access the railway network in

their localities.

I believe that the way forward is through development of our existing network.

The Prime Minister has stated that nothing will stop the project. Opposition is excluded from all the railway press. The feelings and expressions of concern will be steam-rolled for a vanity project. This is the correct vision with the wrong solution and I hope ASLEF, along with others, do not come to regret it.

Rob McMillan, Wolverhampton Branch

Improve existing infrastructure first

I recently received correspondence from the union campaigning for the extension of high speed rail. This contained some impressive statistics regarding wealth creation, job creation and economic growth. However, I noted that there are no sources for these statistics so there is no way of verifying them.

I would also be interested to know what mandate was obtained from the membership to campaign on this issue and how much it is

costing the union. I would further dispute the claim that the new rail will have environmental benefits if it leads to the aforementioned economic growth. My own opinion is that ASLEF should be campaigning to stop cuts to the existing infrastructure before anything else.

Mark James, Driver, Penzance

High Speed - no benefit

I know the union has urged us to support the proposed High Speed 2 (HS2) between London and Birmingham, but I can't agree. HS2 is not about connecting Birmingham and ultimately the north of England to the European High Speed rail network. It would still mean travellers from the Midlands trundling their suitcases down the Euston Road to St Pancras.

London as a conurbation needs to expand – but it has nowhere to go. This scheme provides a solution by which Birmingham with its cheaper housing becomes a 45 minute journey away. Time-wise this compares with most of the other major London commuter

towns. I fear Birmingham will become not 'Upper Chelsea' but 'Lower Camden' with all its attendant problems. Also far from reducing air travel to Europe, I am convinced this is about utilising capacity at Birmingham International to provide more European flights, thus fulfilling the role originally intended for the third runway at Heathrow.

With a proposed speed of 250 mph it is doubtful the train would be compatible with European systems even if the links were made. The wasted opportunity of the Channel Tunnel makes me dubious that through-running is ever envisaged. Furthermore I would not be surprised – given present developments with in-cab signalling and GSMR – to find these new trains do not embody a Driver as we understand it – merely a 'cab operative', trained to operate an emergency brake and other controls only under strict instruction.

Sorry it this seems negative. ASLEF does sterling work supporting us and promoting rail – but this is not the High Speed Rail link that Britain needs.

John Wells, Driver, West Coast Wolverhampton

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To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7324 2400 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk

THORNABY MOTIVE POWER DEPOT REUNION After 50 years the depot now demolished. I would like to inform and invite all members to the first depot reunion to be held in Jack Hatfield Bowling Club Middlesbrough on 14th December 2011 from 13 00hr onwards. For more info call Jim Smith; Tel 01642 823819 Email smith215@sky.com

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FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473



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Still Wapping – Murdoch 25 years on

In January 1986 the print unions went on strike against the corporate clout of Rupert Murdoch and News International (NI). The 'Wapping Dispute' would last 13-months and became one of the defining moments in our trade union history. An exhibition at the Trades Union Congress, London, organised by Unite, the NUJ and the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, remembers the strike...

THE exhibition's panels, posters and pin-badges tell the story of how 5,500 Fleet Street workers were laid off to prepare News International's move to a new factory in Wapping, East London.

The dispute was a prime example of Murdoch's incessant desire for profit – something that has come to light again with this year's 'Hackgate' scandal. Their multinational dynasty has corrupted our politics, our media and has left countless without work.

In 2009 James Murdoch said: 'The only reliable, durable, and perpetual guarantor of independence is profit.' They might appear 'humbled' by recent events but, as the TUC's exhibition rightly shows, the Murdochs have only ever cared about one thing.

DECOYS AND DECEIT

Wapping essentially began with Murdoch announcing the launch of a new newspaper, The London Post. But the newspaper was a fake, a smokescreen for the move to East London. Not only did NI spread word of the paper to its workers, they created a fake issue to dupe them.

John Bailey, 70, a proof-reader at The Sun (and a member of the NGA) at the time, was – like many others – taken in. Then, after working for Murdoch for 17 years he was

sacked without warning.

'The London Post was a complete decoy, and we fell for it', he says. 'So we have to take some criticism for Murdoch's extremely well-organised deceit.'

This deceit was the first of many.

Behind the scenes, cogs were turning. G.W. Richards, solicitor with Farrer & Co., advised NI Managing Director Bruce Matthews: 'If a moment came when it was necessary to dispense with the present workforces, the cheapest way of doing so would be to dismiss employees while participating in a strike.'

'The idea is to catch as many employees in the net as possible.' This is just what happened to NI workers represented by NGA, SOGAT, NUJ and AUEW.

In the meantime workers from the EPTU gladly replaced those now on pickets outside 'Fortress Wapping'.

ENCOURAGED BY THATCHER

In a 1989 speech to industrialists, bankers and technocrats, poor Rupert told how he was 'encouraged' by Mrs Thatcher's treatment of the Miners' Strike but, he said, 'the London police were not necessarily on our side.'

Not necessarily, but more than likely. As well as battering protestors and charging women and children, the London Metropolitan Police even prevented local residents from reaching their homes. In all, 1,435 pickets and supporters were arrested and charged. 'You began to realise this was a state police force', John says. 'It was like something from a Stalinist country.'

The Wapping workers were eventually beaten by a combination of Murdoch's press dynasty, the police and Thatcher's government.

'It made Murdoch a huge amount of money', John says. In fact the Wapping move quadrupled Murdoch's profits, allowing him to buy up almost half of our national media, manoeuvre himself toward the B-Sky-B bid, and take the supreme media position he has enjoyed unchallenged – until this year.

LISTENING IN

When it was discovered Murdoch's News of the World was hacking the phones of celebrities and politicians, not to mention murdered teenager Millie Dowler, the public finally woke up. A web of corruption linking Scotland Yard, Westminster and News International has revealed the sick heart of the Establishment. Now the buck has finally reached the Murdochs themselves.

'Most people in Britain had no idea we were in thrall to people like Murdoch', John says. 'I hope the link has been dispelled at last, so people can start working within a process that is more equitable, and less fearful.' The TUC exhibition is a step in the right direction.

The exhibition will be at the TUC until August 12th, before touring the country into the new year. [SEE BELOW]. It is free entry, donations are welcome.

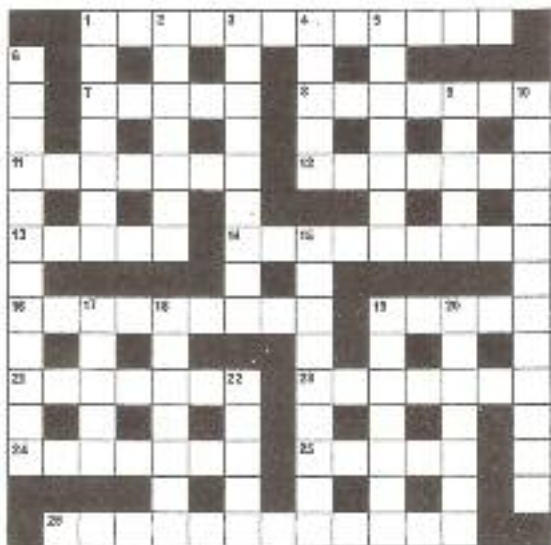
Books, union badges (old and new) and posters are all available. Sadly The News of the World isn't.

● Report by Tom Rollins – freelance journalist - tomrollins88@gmail.com



August 29th – September 9th: St George-in-the-East Church, The Highway, Wapping, E1
September 19th – 30th: Unite regional office, Liverpool **October 3rd – 14th: Goldsmiths College, London** **October 17th – November 18th: Unison head office, Euston, London**
November 26th– 1st Dec: Unite sector conferences, Brighton (delegates only) **December 5th–16th: Unite London and Eastern region office, Manor House, London**

Prize Crossword No. 65 set by TLC



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Abhorred by small boys (4,3,5)
 7 Respond to stimulus (5)
 8 Neutralising agent (7)
 11 Rather dirty (7)
 12 Serried ranks assembled on water (4,3)
 13 Irritate (5)
 14 Upset over barrow boys turnover (5-4)
 16 Away from the main stream (9)
 19 Not fresh (5)
 21 Melancholy verse (7)
 23 Talking foolishly (7)
 24 Sauce (7)

25 Racket (5)

- 26 Good looking colloquially (4,2,3,3)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Syrian nomad (7)
 2 Educational establishment (7)
 3 Servant (9)
 4 Release of surplus water (5)
 5 Make things happen (7)
 6 Commercial interlude on TV (7,5)
 9 Thereabouts (5)
 10 Money wasted (4,3,5)
 15 Country seat for the

Judge (4,5)

- 17 New way to teach a twister! (5)
 18 Burdensome (7)
 19 Where we all prefer to be beside (7)
 20 Sprinter, perhaps (7)
 22 Castrated chicken (5)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Solution to Crossword No 64 which appeared in the August 2011 edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Dennis Ireland** from **Exeter**

ACROSS 1 Mind how you go 7 Caber 8 Towpath 11 Inbreak 12 Hurried 13 Upend 14 Obeisance 16 Skyrocket 19 Diced 21 Eyeless 23 Insulin 24 Diddled 25 Amber 26 Love interest **DOWN** 1 Macabre 2 No Bread 3 Hard Knock 4 Watch 5 Onwards 6 Maximum Speed 9 Alien 10 Hidden Danger 15 Extricate 17 Yield 18 Overlie 19 Disable 20 Culprit 22 Sedan

Name.....

Address.....

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.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 64th ASLEF crossword in the August edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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